

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 177

CS 506 102

AUTHOR Hesler, Marjorie W.
TITLE A Survey of the Ways American Colleges and Universities Meet the Oral Communication Needs of International Students.
PUB DATE Dec 86
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association of Puerto Rico (San Juan, Puerto Rico, December 1986). For related document, see CS 506 101.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communication Apprehension; Communication Research; *Communication Skills; English (Second Language); Foreign Student Advisers; *Foreign Students; Higher Education; *Intercultural Communication; Interpersonal Communication; Public Speaking; Student Adjustment; Surveys; Writing Apprehension
IDENTIFIERS Communication Behavior

ABSTRACT

In light of the increasing number of international students on college campuses in the United States, a study examined how international students' oral communication needs were being met on these campuses as of the summer of 1985. A 19-question survey (probing required or elective status of communication courses, content of courses, assignments, and integration in classes of international and national students) was mailed to foreign student advisors in 165 colleges and universities randomly selected from the directory of the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs. Statistical analysis of the 85 returned answer sheets reveal that, in general, whatever is done for the national student is done for the international. Only 40% of internationals are required to take a communication course. In most of these cases the content of the course is public speaking, and the internationals are in class with national students. In general, international students' apprehension of speaking and writing English is not measured, and if measurement occurs it is in the English as a second language class. National students' speaking and writing apprehension are also generally not measured, but when measurement occurs it usually is in a Communication or English class. (Three references are included, and a sample survey sheet is appended.) (ARH)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED293177

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marjorie W. Hesler

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

A Survey of the Ways American Colleges and Universities
Meet the Oral Communication Needs
of International Students

Marjorie W. Hesler
Department of Communication
Indiana State University
Terre Haute, Indiana

Abstract

A nineteen-item questionnaire was distributed to 165 American colleges and universities. The purpose of the study was to determine how the oral communication needs of international students were met. The items addressed were whether internationals were in class with nationals, the content of the course, and assignments. The results indicate internationals are in class with nationals. The class is primarily public speaking. If the internationals' communication apprehension of writing and speaking is measured, it is not done in the basic communication course.

Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Speech Communication
Association of Puerto Rico, San Juan, December, 1986.

05506102

Abdul, Abdulla, Ali, Mendeaz, Miranda, Mustapha -- these were a few of the unusual names I found on my class roll in the fall of 1981. Due to a death on the staff I was hurriedly assigned a speech communication class of foreign or international students.

Since the 1970's, I had observed the increasing number of foreign students in the halls, dark-eyed young women in long dresses in the library, and groups of young Africans talking on the quad. By late 1979, ISU reflected a small part of the 286,340 foreign students enrolled in the U.S. (Statistical Yearbook, 1982).

While teaching my first class of internationals, I experienced culture shock just as many of them were experiencing. At first, "it was wonderful." I finally was having the opportunity to teach internationals. My interest in cross-culture and nonverbal communication heightened my enthusiasm for teaching that class. Very quickly I was in "the everything is awful" stage. I could not pronounce their names properly. I sometimes reached out to touch and offended some. Other students attempted to drop the class because I was a female. The assignments of informative and persuasive speeches were not meeting their needs, at least from my point of view. Then, as today, the foreign students were enrolled in engineering, business and management, mathematics and computer science, physical and life science and social sciences (Digest of Education Statistics, 1985-1986). I felt the communication needs of foreign students included understanding concepts as the role of perception, the self, and nonverbal behaviors in communication. Many of the students appeared to demonstrate the behaviors of the communication apprehensive. My students needed to increase their skills in communicating

one-on-one and in small groups with Westerners, faculty, administrators, national students, the grocer and the women in the seafood shop.

Spring, 1982, I abandoned the prescribed public speaking focus of the basic course for an interpersonal focus. My students wrote papers about how they perceived the world differently from others, how cultural roles affected communication and they participated in small group activities. I learned that many internationals did not know how to interrupt or participate in a class discussion, and it was difficult for them to publicly state an opinion. If they were to function effectively in a western educational or business environment, those skills needed to be taught and learned.

Between 1983-1984, 339,000 foreign students were enrolled in institutions of higher education in the U.S. This was the largest number of foreign students enrolled in this country (Digest of Education Statistics, 1985-1986). In 1983-84, the foreign student enrollment at ISU was 1,036 or 8.9 percent of the total enrollment. Foreign student enrollment continued to increase at ISU for an all time high of 1,162 or 10.6 percent for Spring, 1985. Then and today, ISU has the highest percentage of foreign students enrolled at any Indiana college or university. Indiana State University's Department of Communication continued to offer each semester, two or three sections, of only internationals, of the basic course. The focus of such courses was public speaking. In my section of 25 to 30 internationals each semester, I focused on the importance of interpersonal communication skills.

I grew to value my students as persons and scholars. My value of students increased, but with each semester the number of unanswered questions increased. Could the needs of the foreign students more efficiently be met in a class of only internationals, or a class of nationals and internationals?

Should the course have a public speaking or interpersonal orientation? How were the foreign students' communication needs being met in other institutions?

All of the above is background for my purpose today. I will describe the results of a survey of 165 colleges and universities in Region V of the directory of the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs.

METHOD

The Instrument

The instrument included 18 multiple choice items and one free response item (Instrument Appendix 1). A reading of the instrument identifies our concern with the ways the communication needs of international students are met. Are internationals required to take a communication course? Are internationals enrolled with national students, or, are the internationals segregated? Is the content of the basic course public speaking, interpersonal etc.? Is the content different than that for the national student? How is the national and the international students' language skills and apprehension of speaking and writing English measured? Items dealing with university size and number of internationals enrolled were also included. The final item asked for identification of the persons completing the survey.

A letter written by ISU's international student advisor was attached to the instrument. (Appendix 2) In this letter, the recipient was encouraged to either respond to the questionnaire or forward it to the proper person.

Procedures

During the spring semester of 1985, the questionnaire, the letter written by the international student advisor, and an IBM answer sheet were mailed to

the foreign student advisors of 165 colleges and universities listed in the directory of Region V of the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs. The colleges were randomly chosen and represented both public and private institutions in the states of Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky and Minnesota.

During the summer of 1985, the questionnaire, the letter and IBM answer sheet were again mailed to those schools who had not responded to the previous mailing. By August 1985, 85 usable IBM answer sheets had been returned.

RESULTS

The data from the 85 IBM answer sheets were analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The following percentages were compiled. The cross tabulation procedure produced the Chi square statistic with a .05 as the level of significance. The Chi-square test reports that the relationship observed in a random sample are representative of those that would have been served in the entire population had been studied.

First, look at the percentages. The results indicated that only 40 percent of internationals are required to take a communication course. If there is a university required communication course, 35.5 percent of the universities provide a public speaking class (item 16). In 79 percent of the schools surveyed, the internationals are in class with national students. Four schools, two of them with total enrollments of 5,000 to over 15,000 (item 16), indicated there are internationals-only sections. The content for the international class is interpersonal at eight schools in comparison to 35.5 percent or 30 schools that indicate a public speaking content.

The content of the course for the international is the same as the national course in 75 percent or 64 out of 72 schools responding to this item.

International students give from three to five speeches in 34.1 percent of the schools. With 17 cases missing, 43.5 schools reported internationals do not write reports of communication activities. The language skill of the international is not measured in 38.3 percent of the schools. In 50.6 percent of those measuring language, the TOFEL score is used.

The International and national students' communication apprehension of speaking and writing English is not measured in approximately 43 percent of the schools. If the internationals' apprehension of writing English is measured, 50 percent indicate it would be in an English class or English as a second language. Forty-nine point five percent of schools surveyed have a total enrollment of 5,001 to over 15,000 with 13 percent of the responding schools indicating they have an international enrollment of 501 to 1,000. The survey was completed by the international student advisor, 37.6 percent, the Speech Communication instructor, 18.8 percent, the instructor of English as a Second Language, 7.1 percent. Other persons completing the survey, 23.5 percent, for a total of 75 schools out of 85 responding to this item.

Examination of the Chi square statistic revealed the following significant relationships:

1. If internationals take a required speech communication course (item 1,) the content of the course is primarily public speaking (item 5) ($p \leq .01$).
2. If internationals are enrolled with nationals (item 2), the content of the course is primarily public speaking (item 5) ($p \leq .05$).
3. If internationals take a required speech communication course (item 1,) the course taken most frequently is public speaking (item 6) ($p \leq .001$). It must be noted again that 40 percent of the schools responded that no speech communication course is required.

4. International students in the primarily public speaking course (item 5), give from three to five speeches (item 8) ($p \leq .01$).
5. International students' apprehension of speaking English (item 12) is usually not measured nor is the apprehension of the national (item 14) measured ($p \leq .001$). However, if the international students' apprehension of speaking English is measured (item 12), it is most frequently measured in English as a Second Language class. When the national students' apprehension of speaking English is measured (item 14), it is most frequently measured in the communication class.
6. International students' apprehension of writing English (item 13) is usually not measured, nor is national students' apprehension of writing English (item 14) ($p \leq .0001$). However, if the international students' and national students' apprehension of writing English is measured, it is more often measured in the English class.
7. International students are enrolled (item 17) in universities with a total enrollment (item 16) of 5,001 to 15,000 ($p \leq .0001$). However, the greatest number of responding schools reported fewer than 50 international students enrolled.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that whatever is done for the national student is done for the international. Apprehension of speaking and writing English is generally not measured. If the internationals' apprehension is measured, it is measured in the English class or the English as a Second Language class. In the case of the national student, the apprehension is measured in the

Communication class. The institutions and the departments of communication are apparently assuming that both internationals and nationals have the same communication needs. The international students and national students are usually enrolled in the same public speaking course preparing and presenting three to four speeches. The generalizability of the statement that what is done for the national is done for the international needs to be tested for all Regions of the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs.

Internationals appear to prefer a university of moderate size with an enrollment of 5,001 to 15,000 students. However, the greatest number of responding schools reported fewer than 50 international students enrolled. If the internationals were perceived to have different communication needs, the small number of internationals enrolled in the institution perhaps precludes international-only sections.

CONCLUSIONS

This survey did not focus on the international students' perceptions. Future research should address the international students' satisfaction with the public speaking course, the activities, or his/her perception of his communication needs, e.g., how to interrupt, or state an opinion.

Finally, the results of this research report the reality of the international students' experience in studying communication, not the researcher's preference, nor even the ideal.

References

Digest of Education Statistics, 1985-86. Center for Statistics, U.S.

Department of Education, Washington, D.C.

The statistics were compiled in the Office of the Registrar, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, 1986.

Statistical Yearbook, UNESCO, 1982.

Appendix I

International Student Oral
Communication Education Procedures

Instructions:

We are attempting to discover how universities and colleges meet the oral communication needs of international students. Please answer the following items on the answer sheet provided using a number 2 pencil. In answering item number 18, provide as much detail as possible and include examples of documents.

If you wish to receive a summary of the results, please include name and address.

1. Our internationals are required to take a basic speech communication course.
A. True
B. False
2. International students are enrolled in a basic speech communication class with national students.
A. True
B. False
3. International students are enrolled in a basic speech communication class with only other internationals.
A. True
B. False
4. The content of the communication course for international students is primarily interpersonal communication.
A. True
B. False
5. The content of the communication course for international students is primarily public speaking.
A. True
B. False
6. International students can meet the university required communication course by enrolling in an oral interpretation, interpersonal or public speaking course.
A. True
B. False

7. The content of the basic course for internationals is different from the course for nationals.
 - A. True
 - B. False
8. International students are required to give:
 - A. 1 to 2 speeches
 - B. 3 to 5 speeches
 - C. 6 to 8 speeches
 - D. not applicable
9. International students write reports of assigned personal communication activities.
 - A. True
 - B. False
10. International students' skill in language usage is measured:
 - A. at beginning of the course
 - B. at the end of the course
 - C. both at the beginning and end of the course
 - D. language skills are not measured
11. International students' skill in language usage is measured by:
 - A. speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit
 - B. TOFEL scores
 - C. SAT verbal scores
 - D. local instrument used (please send sample)
 - E. other
12. The international students' apprehension of speaking English is measured:
 - A. in the communication class
 - B. in the English class or laboratory
 - C. in the English as a Second Language class
 - D. not measured
13. The international students' apprehension of writing English is measured:
 - A. in the communication class
 - B. in the English class
 - C. in the English as a Second Language class
 - D. not measured
14. The national students' apprehension of speaking is measured:
 - A. in the communication class
 - B. in an English class
 - C. in the English as a Second Language class
 - D. not measured
15. The national students' apprehension of writing is measured:
 - A. in the communication class
 - B. in an English class
 - C. in the English as a Second Language class
 - D. not measured

16. What is the enrollment of your university?
- A. less than 500
 - B. 501 to 1,500
 - C. 1,501 to 5,000
 - D. 5,0001 to 15,000
 - E. more than 15,001
17. The number of international students enrolled in your university:
- A. less than 50
 - B. 51 to 100
 - C. 101 to 500
 - D. 501 to 1,000
 - E. more than 1,001
18. The person who completed this form:
- A. International Student Advisor
 - B. Instructor of English as a Second Language
 - C. Instructor of Speech Communication
 - D. Other (Please explain.) _____
-

19. We are attempting to determine practices used in meeting the communication needs of international students. In the space below please describe practices, assignments, and assessments used in your course for international students. Include a copy of the syllabi, assignments or assessments tools when you return this form.